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## Sense and nonsense about Berlin

Margrit Pittman

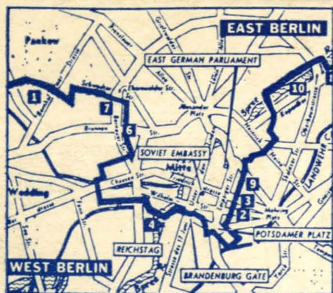
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Margrit and John Pittman

# sense and nonsense

# ABOUT BERLIN



CENTS





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SEVEN AND NOSEWE ABOUT BERLIN



# SENSE AND NONSENSE ABOUT BERLIN

By Margrit and John Pittman

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NEW CENTURY PUBLISHERS: *New York*

1962

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MARGRIT AND JOHN PITTMAN are American journalists who worked in Moscow in the period of 1959-1962 as the accredited correspondents respectively of the *People's World* (San Francisco) and *The Worker* (New York). During that period, on assignment of their papers, they twice visited Germany and reported their observations on the two German states. This is a summary of their observations and conclusions.

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## I.

# WHAT'S BEHIND THE WALL?

At first sight the Berlin wall can throw the American tourist off the track. If he is interested in learning the truth about the recurrent "crises" over Berlin he'll have to do more than just look.

And these days there is compelling reason why every American should be keenly interested. If the recent Cuban crisis brought us all face-to-face with the peril of a world nuclear catastrophe, the Berlin question is potentially far more explosive. At the same time, the resolution of the most threatening aspects of the Cuban crisis revived the opportunity as well as the urgent necessity for action in respect to Berlin. It is now not only absolutely mandatory but also entirely feasible to settle peacefully and honorably this inflammatory problem, so sternly symbolized by the Berlin wall.

The wall is merely a concrete barrier topped by barbed wire. It was erected on August 13, 1961 by the East Berlin government along the already existing frontier between the two sections of Berlin.

Probably it's the barbed wire that gives it its formidable appearance. Add to that the tank barriers erected at the checkpoints which control the entrances and exits of traffic between the two sections, and the East German frontier guards, young men who stand facing the West with legs apart and automatic rifles always at the ready.

It's a pretty grim affair and an American peering at it from West Berlin and relying solely on eye-witness impressions is apt to draw some hard and fast—and absolutely wrong—conclusions.



To understand the wall and what it symbolizes, to relate it to the real causes of tension in Berlin and the real source of danger to the American people, we had to do a lot of looking and listening on both sides of the wall and a lot of mulling over what we'd seen and heard. We also had to do some tough home-work in history, past as well as recent, but after much thought and study we felt reasonably confident we had found the morsel of truth at the source of the sparks which threaten any day to blow up into a conflagration that can also consume America. Knowing where the sparks originate may help avert the explosion.

The first thing Americans need to know about Berlin is that it is German, not American.

Like the rest of Germany, Berlin is divided into an eastern and a western part. But both parts are 120 miles inside the former Soviet occupation zone which is now the German Democratic Republic (GDR). A glance at the map will show that Berlin lies closer to Poland than to the former Anglo-American-French occupation zones, which now constitute the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

Americans may travel freely in both German states and in both sections of Berlin. A passport is sufficient for the FRG and for West and East Berlin. For travel through the rest of the GDR a visa is required.

But the average American, looking at the two German states, is side-tracked from the very beginning. Our newspapers and newscasts and commentators, in their vast majority, as well as our government, and its various departments and agencies, are frank about their bias. So that the American visitor, his head crammed with this bias and with canned interpretations of events in Berlin and the two Germanys, cannot but approach the wall with a closed mind. A look at the wall is supposed to fix indelibly and irrevocably all those preconceptions. It is supposed to be final and conclusive proof of the judgments already made for him. How is he to know that it should actually be only the beginning of his investigation? Looking at it from the West Berlin side, where the authorities have helpfully erected platforms for the



edification of tourists, most Americans are easily persuaded that the wall is incontrovertible evidence of "Communist aggressiveness and injustice."

Even if not already so persuaded, Americans find West Berlin—beyond which many never travel eastward—teeming with "persuaders." That section of the city is virtually crammed with slick, well-groomed young men and chic young women with nice eyes who are eager to discuss the "menace of Bolshevism" in cafes, hotel lobbies, or cozier quarters. There are other helpful sources of "information"—ordinary West Berlin shopkeepers and workers intent on exploiting whatever advantage can be derived from telling Americans what they believe Americans want to hear; personnel of NATO occupation forces, glibly repeating the catchphrases of their indoctrination; and, of course, the West Berlin police, those "absolute authorities" on the statistics of "Communist aggression."

Then there are the West Berlin newspapers and radio newscasts. Even Americans accustomed to war scares and jingoist hysteria in our information media think the West Berlin agencies lay it on too thick. Tales of horror and brutality in East Berlin are contrasted to the "freedom" and "happiness" of West Berliners. Harsh and obscene epithets are freely hurled at the leaders of the GDR. The favored target is Walter Ulbricht, chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers and first secretary of the Socialist Unity Party. He is characterized as everything odious under the sun, but never what his life-long record shows—a German who never faltered in opposing militarists, junkers, money-kings and reactionary politicians who repeatedly dragged his country and his people into disaster.

Another, more insidious way of influencing the visiting American has been made possible through the thoughtfulness of our own businessmen. The American need not trouble to bring anything with him to West Berlin. He will find virtually every article of necessity in West Berlin shops—American-made as well as West German products and those from other NATO countries. Don't underestimate the feeling of "all's right with the world" which



comes with finding a newspaper from home in the hotel lobby or the corner newsstand. Or the availability of American cigarettes and American liquors, of American automobiles and American-style night clubs with the added attraction of German and European performers in ever-so-exotic atmospheres, of American jazz every minute of the day and night if one desires it! In such circumstances it is not too difficult to feel that West Berlin is not so different from home, and then to lapse into forgetting that it actually is not home.

None of this is to be found in East Berlin. True enough, an East German, Chinese, Czech, Soviet or Hungarian article is generally no worse, sometimes better, than its American-made counterpart. And consumer goods made in the GDR and other socialist countries are plentiful in East Berlin stores. But these goods are strange to the American. And the very absence of the familiar American name-brand favorites, although it may seem an insignificant thing, helps West Berlin propaganda sell the idea that *everything* in the East is strange, alien—and hostile.

Open, active and aggressive persuaders swarm in the Federal Republic. In fact, persuasion of the American is so conspicuous a feature of West German behavior that the wonder is more Americans don't suspect it is state policy. Yet, if this idea ever crosses the American's mind, how is he to put it to the test? Whom should he ask to verify it? Certainly it is extremely unlikely he will meet someone with a different outlook, for instance, a German peace advocate, anti-fascist or Communist, millions of whom live and work in the Federal Republic. Americans simply don't move about in such circles. Even more improbable is his chance of meeting such a person, or any West German for that matter, who will talk freely and frankly to an American—conditions being what they are under the Bonn government.

In the atmosphere we found in West Germany, it sounded a trifle odd to hear a hotel employee in Frankfurt declare that West Berlin is "the key to America's survival," our "last outpost" and "first bastion" in Europe, and that if "those East Berlin Communists" are allowed to control the troop and air corridors into



West Berlin, American civilization will be placed in mortal jeopardy. It also seemed presumptuous for Germans to lecture us about our country's national interests—though the words and arguments were almost identical to those we've been reading and hearing for years in our own country. And we didn't relish it when a clerk in a Berlin department store told a customer standing alongside us that Hitler had had the right idea but had merely "made mistakes." The concern for American survival and nostalgia for Hitler somehow did not seem to go together.

We had a memorable conversation with an affluent middle-aged couple who looked the soul of veracity and who, with nary a smile and in solemn pontifical tones, described to us in detail the massed Soviet formations we would see on the other side of the Berlin wall: tank troops and tanks, paratroops, atomic guns, missile carriers, et cetera. "You can't see them from West Berlin," they said, "but they're in all the side streets of East Berlin. Some of the tanks even keep their motors running around the clock!"

Perhaps most helpful of all was the remark of a chap who looked like a banker and talked like a college professor but who was actually a trade union official. He probably wouldn't have his job or his liberty if his name were known. We can identify him only as one of the rare species of Social Democratic Party officials who has managed to keep both his position and a modicum of dedication to West Germany's workers.

To our question regarding the attitude of the West German workers toward the Berlin wall, he asked a simple question: "If the Communists are bent on attacking us in these days of missiles and mobile high-speed offensive arms, why would they build a wall around their territory to keep us out?"

We thought this one over. Yes, a wall is basically defensive and protective, like a fence. People don't build fences to attack their neighbors or trespass on their neighbors' property. A wall is in all essential purposes a reinforced fence. Is that the function and purpose of the Berlin wall? To establish the truth about this required more than a look.



Even a look, however, will clear up one matter—there are no Soviet formations massed in East Berlin. We looked high and low for them, on main streets and in side streets. The only Soviet military personnel we saw were a couple of officers on a shopping junket in East Berlin and the soldiers standing guard at the big memorial, in West Berlin, to the Soviet troops who fell during the Battle of Berlin.

Soviet troops garrisoned in the country are there in accordance with the stipulations of the Warsaw Pact, the defense alliance of the socialist states, just as American, British and French troops are garrisoned in the German Federal Republic as stipulated in NATO agreements. But this is not the same thing as being massed behind the Berlin wall with their tank motors running! Why, we asked ourselves, would that nice old Frankfurt couple, with such intelligent and honest faces, want us to think the Soviets are poised to attack the West?

It is a fact that any American can verify with his own eyes that the Berlin wall is manned by Germans—citizens and frontier guards of the GDR. There are no Soviet troops involved in this operation. Nor, for that matter, are Soviet troops involved in the administration either of East Berlin or of the GDR. And believe it or not, the Soviet commander in the GDR does not have veto power over either the East Berlin administration or the GDR's administration of its frontiers—except in relation to the corridors from Western Germany to West Berlin, which Soviet troops control in keeping with an agreement with the GDR.

This is obviously hard for Americans to believe, since it is contrary to everything we have read and heard about Soviet relations with the East Germans. It is even harder to believe, since we know that the West Berlin administration is under the thumb of commanders of the NATO occupation troops. Mayor Willy Brandt is compelled to rush to the commanders for their consent on every principle issues. Last winter the occupation authorities even rejected his request to allow the West German police to help clear the snow from the streets.

Yet, the fact can easily be verified at the wall. It is Germans



who police and control the wall, but at the checkpoints it is not Germans but NATO troops who carry out these functions in West Berlin. Thus, at Checkpoint Charley, the Friedrichstrasse control point bordering on the American occupation zone, it is our troops who confront the Germans.

This is not altogether meaningless, especially as it relates to the conception so prevalent in our country that "Moscow" and "Premier Khrushchev" are trying "to push" us out of West Berlin. What you see at the wall doesn't lend plausibility to this idea. In the first place there are no Soviet forces there to do the "pushing" even if that were their intention. This is odd because, as they showed during the Battle of Berlin, when push comes to shove, the Soviets are adept at both. If "pushing" us out of West Berlin were really the Kremlin's aim, why in the world would it take measures to reduce or eliminate every kind of contact between Soviet and American troops, that is, to remove all possibilities of a clash that could serve as a pretext for "pushing" us out?

Some people, like Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut, have a simple explanation for this. He expressed it on Dave Susskind's TV show, September 30, 1962. All we have to do is "be firm" with the Soviets, he said, and they'll back down. He documented this thesis with the observation that the Soviet had been transporting their guards for the Soviet memorial in West Berlin through Checkpoint Charley. We told them to take another route and they did. They'd been using armored cars to transport the guards and we told them to quit doing this and they did. Therefore, all we have to do is "be firm."

But the Senator apparently didn't appreciate the fact that the Soviet compliance with American requests, far from convincing anybody that the Kremlin is intent on "pushing" us out of West Berlin, merely shows the Kremlin's inclination to avoid situations that could escalate into a development in which real pushing by both sides might be unavoidable. The Senator also forgot, or seemed to have forgotten, the one case which completely refutes his argument. This was the occasion in October, 1961, when General Lucius Clay ordered American tanks to drive up Fried-



richstrasse and "to hell with the wall." If that is the kind of "firmness" Senator Dodd has in mind, it didn't pay off. The Soviets also drove their tanks up to the wall and theirs outgunned ours. The show got Clay more plaudits as a hero and our newspaper publishers sold a lot more newspapers, but after you tote up the profits and losses, there's nothing whatsoever left to underwrite Senator Dodd's prescription for a Berlin settlement.

On the other hand, what you actually see in Berlin is the total absence of any evidence to back the assertion that somebody is trying "to push" us out of West Berlin. And if what you see isn't enough to convince you, you ought to ponder on what reasons could move Khrushchev to try to eliminate all possibilities of a Soviet-American clash by turning over control of even the access routes to West Berlin to Germans—to the GDR authorities. This is one of things he wants to achieve through his often-proposed peace treaty with the two German states.

One other aspect of the "aggressive" character of the Berlin wall struck us, something we'd read about long before we ever saw the wall. We thought it extremely peculiar that an aggressive contraption should invariably produce casualties amongst the alleged aggressors instead of among the aggressors' targets. We wondered why the victims of every incident to date have been East German frontier guards or East Berliners—why not a single member of the NATO occupation forces and not a single person on the West Berlin side of the frontier has been a casualty of this wall. Unless the East Germans are invariably poorer marksmen than their West German counterparts, which was a trifle hard to swallow, some other explanation was required.

We went to East Berlin to check on some of these contradictions. We were able to do so without difficulty. The East Berlin authorities were not in the least reluctant to allow us to inspect the wall and speak with the frontier guards. We could never have imagined the situation was the way we found it.



## II.

# HOW INCIDENTS ARE MADE

The day we chose to inspect the wall was one of mid-July's best—not too warm, not too much sun, just pleasant. We'd have preferred to sit at one of the many sidewalk cafes that dot East Berlin's downtown and eat ice cream, or go window-shopping on Karl Marx Allee, or even look through some of the new apartments constantly being built in the GDR capital. Thanks to prefabrication and sound budgeting. But our appointment was fixed and we were aware that not every American visiting East Berlin has the chance to speak with the commander of the GDR's First Frontier Brigade.

Lt. Col. Gerhardt Tschichke is 47, a man of medium height, very energetic, and quite informal—a far cry from the Prussian martinets one expects every German officer to be. He interrupted his work and sat at a table with us. We asked about incidents—how many, where, what, who, with what consequences?

"The most serious incidents happened in May and June this year," he said. "On May 23, Sergeant Peter Goering of our border guards was shot and killed. On June 18, Sergeant Reinhold Huhn was shot and killed in cold blood by an agent of West German groups who had tunneled under the wall to take a group of our people over to West Berlin."

(After returning to the United States we learned that a third GDR citizen, Captain Rudi Arnstadt of the People's Army, had been killed on August 14.)

"Have any West Berlin police or NATO forces been killed?" we asked.

"Not one. None have even been injured because none of our



people have ever fired at them. We have strict discipline among our guards."

He walked to a bulletin board in his office and pulled off a document tacked to it. "We have four rules in regard to the use of weapons and we require absolute obedience." He laid the order on the table and read off the rules.

"First, no member of the occupation troops must be shot at or even aimed at.

"Second, firing is permitted only when parallel with the frontier, never across it.

"Third, it is absolutely impermissible for children to be aimed at—no matter what the circumstances.

"Fourth, before firing at violators of the frontier or before even threatening to fire, every attempt must be made to arrest them."

Colonel Tschichke looked up. "Once a month all guards must sign documents stating that they have been informed of these instructions and have obeyed them. They don't have the right to use weapons even in self-defense against assault."

We glanced across the hall at one of the guards who had just entered. His automatic rifle hung from his shoulders with its muzzle pointed directly forward and its trigger within instant reach of his right hand. This did not seem to fit in with the Colonel's explanation.

"Why arm these guards with automatic rifles and order them to carry them ready for action if they're forbidden to use them?"

"They will certainly use them when necessary to protect our territory and our people," replied the Colonel. "Certain people in West Berlin keep talking about smashing across the frontier in force. We want to discourage them from such foolhardy action. But if they are not discouraged and persist, we want to be ready to stop them at a moment's notice."

"Then people can fire at your guards from the West Berlin side, but you won't let your guards return the fire? Surely, such a set-up is not going to discourage them. On the contrary, it may well encourage more provocations on the part of West Berlin."

"Correct. We do not return their fire. We can say that they



have not, at least so far, tried to smash their way through by force. On the other hand, we have not been able to stop their provocations. If we replied to every provocation from West Berlin, we would actually be carrying on a shooting war."

He got up again and walked over to a row of files. Returning with a folder of documents, he laid them out on the table.

"Here, take a look at these. They are our monthly records of provocations."

We copied the figures in our notebooks. Here's a summary of the record of provocations in Colonel Tschichke's files for the period from January 1, 1962 to July 15, 1962:

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| January .....     | 238 |
| February .....    | 231 |
| March .....       | 318 |
| April .....       | 329 |
| May .....         | 361 |
| June .....        | 357 |
| July (1-15) ..... | 165 |

The provocations were classified according to type and according to the identity of those involved. In the six and one-half month's period, there were:

443 disturbances and nuisances caused by hurling incendiaries in East Berlin buildings, dumping bottles and refuse over the wall, shooting out window panes with BB guns, and so on;

86 provocative broadcasts by soundtrucks brought up to the wall;

135 cases of damage inflicted on the wall;

202 attempted violations of the frontier from the West by driving past control officers at the checkpoints, ignoring control officers and accosting them, etc.

622 attempts to establish contacts with East Berliners;

6 contacts successfully carried through;

372 attacks on frontier guards with stones, bottles, etc.

63 attacks on frontier guards with gunfire!



As to the identify of the provocateurs, this could not be established in 118 of the provocations. Of the rest, 718 were committed by civilians, 589 by West Berlin police and customs officials and 494 involved troops of the NATO forces.

Colonel Tschichke pointed out that "each month the provocations increase and become more serious." He declared that "the NATO troops in West Berlin are becoming more aggressive. Attempts are increasing to explode hand grenades and plastic bombs—like the French ultras. Every day NATO troops aim at our border guards and pretend to pull the trigger. Sometimes their trigger fingers slip."

He told us these provocations are covered up by the West Berlin police, who manufacture stories about incidents in which East Berlin guards are alleged to be the aggressors. We did not doubt this since almost every report in our press of an incident in Berlin is issued or "confirmed" by the West Berlin police.

"Only last night on Heidelberger Strasse, in the American sector, youngsters shot at our guards with air rifles," the Colonel went on. "They even shot through the open window of a family living near the border—a woman was hit. Five yards from these hoodlums were two West Berlin police who did nothing whatsoever to stop it."

He said this type of provocation is usually a diversion to distract attention from a more serious incident being carried out at some other part of the frontier. "Sure enough, about one thousand yards from that place an incendiary was thrown at one of our lookout boxes."

He went to his desk and brought an object wrapped in paper. It was a shoe polish can, perforated on top, and containing a rag soaked in gasoline.

"Pretty amateurish, something kids would do," he said. "But it could have started a fire and destroyed the lookout box."

Colonel Tschichke gave us permission to inspect the wall and to talk with the frontier guards at Checkpoint Charley. Funny what a different impression you get from the eastern side of this over-sensationalized spot! While we were there a couple of buses



full of Danish schoolteachers passed through for a sightseeing tour of East Berlin. It was all very routine, like going to Canada from Niagara Falls or to Ensenada Beach from San Diego. For foreigners there's nothing to it but a display of one's passport.

The main purpose of the control is to check on East Berliners and GDR citizens going to West Berlin, and West Berliners and FRG citizens going to East Berlin. For them, a permit is required in addition to their passport, and application forms are available at the checkpoint.

But the view from the eastern side of Checkpoint Charley is no more edifying than that from the western side. The first thing that caught our attention was the gang of West Berlin police and tough-looking youths standing on the corner. They were laughing and joking, but every pedestrian that passed from one or the other direction got a severe going over. They scrutinized him with keen attention.

On the elevated platform a few feet from this gang were a group of tourists. Two had binoculars, all were staring at the GDR frontier guards and watching the processing of traffic through the control point. Having already seen what they were watching, we know there was nothing to look at but the buildings in the background and the traffic. But this seemed to satisfy them and a few began unleashing cameras and taking shots of the scenery.

The little house in the center of the street, about 150 yards west of the wall, was the U.S. control post. The Stars and Stripes fluttered over it and a tall MP stood at the entrance. A U.S. Army official car was parked before the door.

It was a very dull picture and we had to put our imagination to work in order to figure out why tourists came to this spot.

"Why all the interest over there at this moment?" we asked a sergeant of the guards who was showing us the place.

"They hope something will happen," he replied.

"Think they'll get their hope?"

"One never knows. There are a few more West Berlin police and hoodlums than usual. Something could happen any time."



He told us he doubted it today, however, because the press and propaganda agencies weren't out in force. He said that when a provocation was being planned, the West Berlin police and the agencies carrying it out usually notified the press so as to get as much publicity as possible.

"Recently a car with a U.S. license drove up to the border," the sergeant said. "The passengers got out and placed a fried chicken leg across the demarcation line, that is, in our territory. Then they drove off. But we looked up and saw an entire battery of cameras in a western observation tower. They were trained on the spot where the chicken leg lay. They hoped to photograph one of our men picking it up. It would have made good propaganda about everybody in the GDR being hungry."

We left the wall feeling sure about one thing—it was being used for purposes of *defense*. What we had seen and heard provided no whit of evidence for any other conclusion. The evidence we had obtained established the defensive, peaceful function of this concrete fence.

Also, we heard something at Checkpoint Charley that gave us cause for concern. We didn't have time to wait and check the story and can't vouch for its validity. But we have no reason to doubt its veracity and we pass it on just as we heard it.

The place was one of the reception rooms in the control station operated by the GDR frontier guards. We were talking with guard Heinz Klemm, a 24-year-old woodworker from a small village in Thuringia. Heinz's father was a worker, too, he told us, and life had not been too easy for the family. When some pals of Heinz went to West Berlin and brought back leaflets calling for provocations against the GDR and demanding the incorporation of the GDR into the Federal Republic and NATO, Heinz blew his top. Next day he quit his job and volunteered for the frontier guards.

We asked Heinz if he and his buddies exchanged greetings with our American boys at Checkpoint Charley. Heinz replied that he had been a frontier guard for two and one-half years and had been stationed at various parts of the frontier. He said he

had often exchanged civilities with the English and French frontier troops but never with the Americans.

"The Americans seem really to hate us," he said. "Stay here a few days and you'll see them march up to the frontier some morning. They raise their hands in the nazi salute and shout 'Sieg heil!' They know we don't think that's funny."

Neither did we. Having visited Buchenwald and nazi death camps in the USSR, we fail to see anything funny whatsoever in any part of nazi ritual or practice. But what disturbed us most was Heinz's information about the attitude of American youth, who are demonstrating hatred for those very German youth who are resolved there'll be no return of the nazis in this part of Germany. If Heinz was telling the truth, something seemed very wrong about our choice of friends at the wall.



### III.

## TRUTH ABOUT THE "ESCAPES"

If the wall is a defense and protection vis-a-vis West Berlin and the Federal Republic, is it also a defense and protection vis-a-vis the East Berliners and the citizens of the GDR? Is it, as our newspapers say, a fence to keep GDR citizens in? The barbed wire atop the concrete barrier certainly reminds one of pictures of a concentration camp, and that is precisely what the GDR has been called by its enemies. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and his aides are forever charging that the people of the GDR are virtual prisoners of the Communists, held against their will and forced to work, and that if the wall wasn't there the East Germans would all flee to the Federal Republic.

We went to see a number of people to get the facts on this matter. None of them support Adenauer's claims.

"Germany has been split into two states since 1949," Hermann Axen reminded us. Axen is a youthful-appearing, stocky man who spent time in Hitler's concentration camps and is now editor in chief of *Neues Deutschland*, organ of the ruling Socialist Unity Party.

He talked to us for almost an hour in the office adjoining the paper's editorial rooms and had his secretary bring in files of old papers from time to time to establish his points. It was close to deadline time and we weren't very happy at the thought of interviewing an editor at such an hour. But Axen seemed to think our questions important.

"The thing to remember is that during all those years from



1949 the frontier was open. You could go to West Berlin simply by buying a subway ticket and getting off there. And about two million people passed back and forth across the border every day in Berlin alone. Sixty thousand East Berliners worked in West Berlin and eighteen thousand West Berliners worked in East Berlin. So what happened when the border was open?

"About two million people left for good, about half a million came, and about seventeen million stayed. That's important to keep in mind—seventeen million of our people stayed."

"But what about the people who left? Why did they leave?"

"We estimate that most of the people who left did so for economic reasons," Axen replied. "About a third went for political reasons."

"Don't forget what the GDR was like during those years after the war. This was the least industrialized section of Germany. We had some factories but no raw materials. All of Germany's heavy industry was located in the West, mainly in the Ruhr but also in other sections of what is now the Federal Republic. In contrast, this was predominantly an agrarian region."

"Also, don't forget that this was the homeland of the Junkers and the Prussian militarists, and the nazi movement was a mass movement here."

We had heard this from other GDR citizenese. Nazi ideas and methods had made a deep imprint. An entire nation had been infected. We remembered attending the opera in Leipzig and watching the faces in the lobbies during the intermission. A friend had answered some of our questions.

"That one? You can't be sure. I've never seen him before. He might be an ex-SS officer—looks arrogant and mean enough. But it's wrong to jump to conclusions. He may be completely reformed. . . . The elegant one in the backless gown? Never saw her before either. But she's certainly sleek. Definitely well-preserved—you can bet she wasn't suffering in the early 1940's. . . . Oh yes, certainly there are Jewish people here. I've never heard of any incident. Not that there aren't people who would like to—but they don't dare. They'd land in prison and fast . . ."



Only seventeen years since the war ended, since the nazis' house of cards crashed, carrying millions of Germans with it! In East Germany they took on the responsibility of changing the minds and hearts of nearly twenty million people. Two million wouldn't stay, and about a third of these wouldn't stay for political reasons! How remarkable that those who left for political reasons were only one-third of the two million, that is, only a fraction of the total population of East Germany! This had been the Soviet occupation zone, and it had been the Soviet people against whom the nazis committed their most fiendish war crimes. This sector was now ruled by an anti-fascist, anti-racist coalition in which German Communists were the most powerful component, and it had been the German Communists as well as the German Jews against whom the nazis had been most inhuman. Yet, seventeen millions Germans, a majority of whom had been subjected to the virus of nazism, had elected to stay in this part of Germany! "This is the more significant fact—not the number who left," declared Hermann Axen.

But why are the "escapes" continuing? How many of these can be attributed to political disaffection, how many to the economic situation?

"You asked why we built the wall," he said. "That is one of the reasons—to prevent our economy from being undermined. First, after the three Western Powers violated the Potsdam Agreement and introduced a separate currency, they organized the systematic theft of our goods. Later, when we checked out, they launched a massive plunder of our skilled labor force and our specialists, luring them with all sorts of exaggerated offers and promises. To stop this, it was necessary to establish control over our frontier. The wall has done that."

Axen went into detail about both types of "theft." He explained how the introduction of another currency in West Berlin and Western Germany had affected the East German economy. West Berlin speculators, he said, had set artificial rates of one West mark to four East marks, and this rate had been immediately recognized by the Western Powers as "official." This enabled



people who worked in West Berlin but lived in East Berlin to buy goods in East Berlin and sell them in West Berlin at a considerable profit. They were paid in West marks which they exchanged for East marks at the rate of one to four, bought up goods in East Berlin, carried them back to West Berlin and sold them for West marks, which they again exchanged for East marks, and so on. Thus, the currency "reform," as it was called in the West, and the subsequent manipulation of rates, enabled the enemies of the East German regime to corrupt a section of the East Berlin population through financial racketeering, to strip the East German stores of consumer goods, and to incite unrest and discontent over the resulting shortages. Every year they took out about 5,500 tons of meat, 2,000 tons of butter, clothes, cameras, typewriters and other articles, in vast quantities.

"The West Berliners claimed there was no freedom in the East," said Axen, "but they came here in droves and bought up everything they could. They were perfectly free to do so.

"This went on for years," he went on. "It was ruinous and drained the country. It cost us about three-and-a-half billion marks a year. Finally, we instituted some control. It no longer was so easy for West Berliners to come here and buy up our goods. But East Berliners who worked in West Berlin and had become corrupted could still evade the controls to a certain extent. They lived here, enjoyed our low rents, our medical care and other social services at the expense of the tax-payers, and at the same time were participating in this robbery of our consumer goods."

Not to be set back by the GDR's controls, West Berlin and West German authorities concentrated on taking the GDR's skilled workers. The Federal Republic was enjoying a boom during these years, thanks to the Marshall Plan and the enterprise of American business bigwigs who are buying into West German corporations. Industries were demanding more workers, and governments and politicians took steps to get them. GDR leaders speak of what followed as "systematic head-hunting campaigns."

A psychologist friend who is a staff member of the GDR's outstanding experimental medical institute, told us: "All the



experts in our institute have received job offers from West Berlin." She said that although she and her colleagues were well paid and had the opportunity for advancement, many of the offers from West Berlin held out still greater salary increases and promotions. The recruitment of the GDR's skilled workers and specialists became a fixed policy of all West German corporations and thereby the policy of the West German state and the West Berlin government. There were other motivations in the development of this policy. Bonn politicians saw it as a means of subverting GDR authority; West German militarists and revanchists calculated on using it to achieve their aims vis-a-vis not only the GDR but also the countries of Eastern Europe; the Western Powers exploited it in the cold war against the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc. And to achieve each of these aims, huge sums were spent, special purpose organizations were set up by the score, and hundreds of thousands of people were employed.

For example, the Bayer Chemical Works in Leverkusen, FRG, is a subsidiary of IG Farben, the same IG Farben which supplied munitions to Hitler's war machines and gas to Himmler's death factories. This subsidiary set up a so-called "Immigrants' Committee" with the set objective of recruiting GDR specialists. To anyone who recruited a GDR scientist it paid a "bonus" of 500 to 1,000 marks.

For recruiting pharmaceutical workers from the GDR, the Asta Chemical Works in Brackwede, Westphalia, paid up to 1,000 marks.

In 1960, the Bonn Ministry for Expelled and War Injured Persons allocated two million marks (about half a million dollars) for the recruitment of GDR university professors.

In 1961, the Equalization of Burdens Bank received 37 million marks for granting credits to employers who would set up enterprises in West Germany with workers recruited from the GDR.

The Bonn Ministry of Labor and Social Order spent over four billion marks (roughly \$1 billion!) in 1961 for "war victims and similar expenditures." The term "similar expenditures" was a euphemism for recruitment of GDR workers.



Such examples could go on and on. The biggest names in West German business circles actively participated—Friedrich Krupp, Telefunken, AEG, Deutsche Bank and IG Farben. All the political parties of the Federal Republic took part through their “Eastern Bureaus.” Every ministry of the Bonn government was involved. All the major professional associations and organizations of employers, resettled Germans from Eastern countries, veterans and other groupings of the population had special departments concerned with this work.

A tell-tale document is a directive issued August 21, 1956 by the West German Ministry for All-German Affairs and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation “concerning the encouragement of meetings on Federal territory or West Berlin between inhabitants of the Soviet occupation zone including East Berlin and inhabitants of Federal German territory or West Berlin.” This directive provided for the payment of sums to cover “travelling expenses” of GDR citizens enticed to attend such meetings. As much as 20,000 marks were paid for these “travelling expenses.” The directive stipulated that: “Only citizens of the Soviet occupation zone who can produce evidence of citizenship may receive this assistance. These citizens of the Soviet occupation zone must be prepared and able to represent all-German interests in the Soviet occupation zone according to the West German conception.”

From the very start of this recruitment campaign, it was clear what was meant by the “West German conception” of “representing all-German interests” in the GDR. The recruitment of workers, which many Americans might consider only fair business practices in a competitive society, also entailed other obligations—espionage, subversion, the fomenting of civil strife. In respect of these, all the motivations behind the recruitment campaigns coincided. GDR leaders have repeatedly listed by address, telephone number and name the number of organizations actively working in West Berlin to achieve the aim of “liberating” the GDR and its socialist allies. The number of these organizations varies. To evade detection, names and addresses are frequently changed—it may be go today and only 75 next month!



The business of recruitment took many forms. In the case of most of those who left the GDR, the promise of higher wages, promotion, comfortable apartments and other amenities not then obtainable in the GDR was sufficient. But if these inducements proved insufficient, the "head-hunters" used other methods. Elaborate systems for studying the past and present records as well as the private lives of GDR citizens were put into operation. A nazi past, a long-forgotten police record, marital infidelity, even remarks critical of the GDR government were used to "persuade" people to leave for the West. Children and young girls were not exempted. A youth who could be persuaded to come over for a "night of fun" could also be induced to remain and put pressure on his family to leave.

The propaganda value of every success achieved in this campaign is evident. And it can be said that not only the Bonn and West Berlin propagandists but also those in the NATO countries including Americans, made the most of it. Every person who left was represented as an "escapee" from "Communism." The wholesale recruitment of workers, spies, diversionists and provocateurs was called a "flight to freedom." It was made to seem that the GDR was one huge concentration camp of enslaved Germans, all of whom were said to be intent on seizing any chance to overthrow their tormentors and choose the "free world."

Unfortunately, this picture of the situation has become a stereotype in our own country. This is the picture most Americans take with them when visiting Germany. It is a great pity—the picture is a total distortion of reality. But most Americans looking at Berlin and the two German states have already been brainwashed.

"So the wall was put up to stop this traffic. With what results?"

We put the question to Hermann Axen and listened to him detail the developments since August 13, 1961.

"In the main it has been stopped," he said. "We now have a strong frontier and one we can control. The theft of our consumer goods has ended, and we have curbed the head-hunters.

"The wall has paid off economically, too. Of course it cost



us something to build it and it costs to maintain it. But it's been an investment from which we have profited and are still profiting. All our economic goals were unattainable except in the main items so long as the frontier remained open. We had planned a 33 per cent increase in industrial output by 1961, but except for certain major industries we managed to reach only 27 per cent. Today we are exceeding our goals and doing it without strain."

Other figures we saw showed East Berlin's monthly industrial output shot up from 14 million marks worth of goods prior to August 13 to 20 million marks worth by December 1961.

Axen said the matter of fulfilling economic plans and reaching the planned goals became acute at the time of the fifth congress of the Socialist Unity Party. The congress set the objective of overtaking and surpassing Western Germany in per capita output. This would have demonstrated to the people in both German states, had it been achieved, that socialism was the superior system. It was then that Bonn and the West German business community accelerated their recruitment campaign, as well as their propaganda effort. They left the GDR leaders no alternative but that of countering their offensive with a measure to control its frontiers.

For the bastion and launching-pad of the Bonn offensive was West Berlin. This was the center of all its activities, the administrative, organizing, directing center for its many thousands of paid labor recruiters, spies and provocateurs.

"Again and again we appealed to the occupation authorities to stop those activities," Axen continued. "We sent notes. We sent documents. We turned over names and addresses. We supplied eye-witness accounts of illegal activities, even of criminal activities. We got nowhere. The Western Powers, for their own reasons, always sided with Bonn. They even supported and assisted these activities. Do you think the Federal Republic and the West Berlin leaders could do this without the protection and assistance of the occupation forces? They couldn't carry on for a week."

At this moment Axen's secretary brought in files of recent issues of *Neues Deutschland* and the editor in chief pointed out



reports of recent "escapes" of GDR citizens to the West.

"As you can see, they're still at it," he said. "They feel frustrated so they've become more reckless. They spend money and hire people to dig tunnels under the wall—anything to bring the contacts they've already established out of the country and to activate new contacts."

We asked if all the people "escaping" or trying to leave could be characterized as agents of the West.

"No, not everyone. The wall actually produced hardship for some people. Their relatives are in the West and they are here. They have dear friends in the West. We took this into account at the beginning and we still do.

"When we put up the wall we arranged for visits of West Berliners to East Berlin. We announced that West Berliners were free to come over, but we insisted on our right to select those who came. We had no intention of letting a swarm of saboteurs and spies enter our country under the pretext of having relatives or friends here.

"We set up booths on the territory of the Berlin transit system to facilitate this traffic. The officials in these booths were authorized to accept applications for entry-permits and to process them quickly and efficiently. But no sooner had we opened these booths than the West Berlin authorities launched a two-pronged attack against them. When hundreds of West Berliners lined up to apply for permits, crowds of hoodlums were organized and sent to the booths. They threatened and assaulted the West Berliners and in some cases tried to set fire to the booths.

"At the same time, the West Berlin police appeared with warrants from the West Berlin Senate demanding that the booths be closed. I must tell you frankly that the warrants indicated that they had originally been issued by the Western occupation powers.

"Soon the booths had to be closed. But that doesn't end the matter. We are still willing to allow West Berliners to visit East Berlin if they apply for a permit with sufficient reason."

We reminded Axen that he had said the necessity to secure its economy had been only one of the reasons for the GDR govern-



ment's decision to build the wall. We asked him what other reasons lay behind the decision. His remarks in answer to this question concluded our interview. They are, we believe of paramount concern for Americans. But before recounting them it is worth while to relate additional information we obtained concerning the "escapes to freedom."

Two of the people we saw had quite a lot to say on the subject of the current "escapes." One was Josef Streit, GDR State Prosecutor, a post with functions similar to those of our U.S. Attorney General. The other was Waldemar Schmidt, deputy Mayor of Berlin, the GDR's capital. Besides being extremely informative, talking with these men was a rewarding personal experience. Like other leading personalities of the GDR government, and in contrast to their counterparts in the Federal Republic, they were life-long anti-fascists. None are Johnny-come-latelies to the anti-fascist struggle, or ex-nazis anxious to cover up their past. Schmidt is a former Berlin machinist who became a working class leader in his youth. The Gestapo arrested him in 1935. He stayed in Hitler's prisons until he was freed by Soviet troops in 1945. As for Streit, his background was dramatized for us by an event in West Germany which occurred shortly before our interview.

Streit was born and reared in Czechoslovakia's Sudeten area. He grew up in the same town and at the same time as another German named Wolfgang Fraenkel. Coincidence would have it that while Streit became GDR Procurator General, Fraenkel became the Federal Republic's Procurator General. But at the time we talked with Streit, his townsman had been removed from the FRG post amidst much criticism and controversy. Behind Fraenkel's dismissal was an enormous file of documents establishing the FRG procurator's participation in some of the worst crimes committed by the nazis. The documents had been delivered to West German officials by Streit.

Streit's path was different. He, too, might have followed in the footsteps of Fraenkel and become a judge passing out sentences on people the nazis wanted to exterminate. But when Streit's father, a glass-maker, died after the first world war, the boy



learned printing and entered the working people's movement of Czechoslovakia. In 1938 Streit was imprisoned by the Nazis. He passed through Dachau and Mauthausen concentration camps before he was freed in 1945 by United States troops. When such a man speaks, you can't help thinking of the price he paid to defend his conception of the truth.

"Yes, we have good reason to know about these escapes," he said. "We've just finished a trial in the supreme court."

He opened a drawer and selected a large folder of legal papers which he thumbed through and selected one to read.

"The principal defendants were Gottfried Steglich and Carston Mohr," Strait said. "They are members of the Girmann Group in West Berlin, an organization which specializes in organizing border incidents and 'escapes.'"

"The Girmann organization maintains a secret students' group at the Ford University in West Berlin. According to Steglich, this university group has three hundred members and functions along strictly conspiratorial lines.

"You should know that Steglich flunked out of high school in the GDR in 1953. He went to West Berlin and received a scholarship at Ford's university. He was a good pupil in other things if not in his studies, and before we caught him he had been assistant chief of a refugee reception center at 20 Suedwestkorso, in West Berlin. Like all the members of the Girmann group who do full-time work for that group, he was also on the payroll of the West Berlin Senate.

"We know, and witness Juergen Miehle substantiated our knowledge during the trial, that the Girmann organization has a special so-called 'tunnel detachment' who got a plan of the city's underground sewers, cables and passageways from no less authoritative a source than the office of West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt.

"Defendants testified at the trial that members of the Girmann organization systematically visit the GDR at fixed intervals. They come to ferret out terminal points for tunnels and to arrange for escapes. Every person recruited for an escape brings the Girmann agent a four hundred mark bonus.



"We found five weapons on the defendants—Browning automatics used in the Belgian army. One also had an American-made walkie-talkie to talk from the east side of the wall to his friends in West Berlin. Both were convicted, and at the end of the trial Steglich appealed to his colleagues in West Berlin to stop working for the Girmann organization."

"And what was the outcome of the trial?" we asked.

"Steglich got fifteen years. Mohr received seven."

"How do these people come over from West Berlin?"

"Through the control posts. You see, any West Berlin citizen can come over if he has a permit. A student might say, for example, that he wants to obtain material from our libraries. Unless he has a record or our people can identify him as a member of some hostile organization, he is given a permit. For those that don't care to subject themselves to our examination, there is another way.

"Steglich testified that he had forged two hundred and thirty passports and had used the passports of citizens of Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium and Sweden. Steglich testified that he personally had supplied members of his organization with these passports and had issued each one a packet containing some of the currency, cigarettes, matches and clothes labels of the country which issued the passport. They preferred Swiss and Austrian passports because that would eliminate the problem of language."

Sometime later in our own country we had cause to recall Streit's conversation. We read a United Press International report from Berlin dated September 19, 1962. It related the "escape to freedom" of 29 persons through such a tunnel whose construction—in the words of the press report—had been "undertaken with the full knowledge of the West Berlin city government." The report went on to declare that "Mayor Willy Brand't press office said that work on the tunnel was carried out by university students, reported to be graduate students of West Berlin's Technical University."

In the office of the deputy mayor of East Berlin we gained another insight into the "escapes to freedom." It was an aspect



we Americans seldom if ever read or hear about—the flight to the East. The editor of *Neues Deutschland* had estimated that during the period from 1949 to 1961 approximately half a million people had come to the GDR from the West. Waldemar Schmidt brought the figures up to date.

“Every day West Berliners and West Germans send us applications for citizenship in our country,” he said. “They want to remain and to live and work here, and among them are many former ‘political refugees.’ Of course, we screen these applications very thoroughly. We keep most of the applicants. Some we send back.”

“How many stay?”

“About ten or twelve every day.”

This is something most Americans know nothing about. The “escapes” we’ve heard or read of have always been “to the free world,” that is, to West Berlin and West Germany. According to the picture of life in the two German states which most Americans have had stuffed into their minds, why would any sensible German want to go to the GDR? We put the question to Mayor Schmidt.

“They come for many reasons,” was his answer. “For jobs which they know they can get here. For our pensions and social security which they can’t get in West Germany. Then, some of these people lived here before and want to return to spend the rest of their lives in their birthplace. Some have parents and other relatives, some have old friends they want to be near. Most of the youth who come do so to escape the militarization of West Germany. They don’t want to serve in an army like the army their fathers and uncles served in—and maybe died in.”

“Do any come for political reasons?”

“Yes, some do. Some see what is happening in West Germany and fear the 1930’s are coming back again.”

Mayor Schmidt anticipated an increase in the flow of Germans from the West. We gathered that he believed the West German boom had levelled off and the economic situation in the Federal Republic would continue to deteriorate. The demand for work-



ers had ended and unemployment was beginning to rise. Big struggles for increased wages and social security were under way in the trade unions. We know today that Schmidt was right.

That doesn't mean, however, that efforts to recruit citizens of the GDR will be abandoned. The economic motivation may disappear, but this can spur even more intense efforts to penetrate the wall. Economic difficulties, by increasing the discontent of the resettled Germans, may give added force to revanchist propaganda, to demand for "restoring our lands and properties in the East."

Our interview with Mayor Schmidt helped clarify a number of facts about the Berlin wall, which in turn led us to the conclusion that:

1. The wall represents not an act of aggression against the West but an act of defense against attacks from the West.

2. The wall represses only the small minority of citizens of the GDR whose activities jeopardize the security and interests of the majority of GDR citizens; it serves to protect the interests and security of the majority of the GDR population.

3. By no stretch of the imagination does the wall in any way whatsoever constitute an infringement on or a threat to the rights and interests of the American people.



#### IV.

## THE "TAME" TIGER IN OUR FLAT

Having established these facts to our own satisfaction, we decided to follow up another popular notion which we felt required investigation. This is the widespread belief that there is no individual liberty in the GDR, no comfort, no material well-being, no freedom from care, no gaiety. According to this view, widely held by misinformed Americans, everything is drab and dull in the GDR, life is a continuous struggle and drudgery, people are shoddily dressed, often go hungry, and no one dares say what he really thinks for fear of the secret police.

This belief feeds and supports the "escape to freedom" propaganda; it is little wonder, then, that the Bonn and West Berlin propagandists have nurtured it so assiduously. Americans who repeat it uncritically and spread it as gospel truth are not doing their fellow-countrymen a service. This "truth" bears no relation whatsoever to reality.

We attended a forum of working and student youth in the university town of Jena. Present were officials of the GDR government, the city administration, the Socialist Unity Party, and the Free German Youth. The hall was packed to the rafters, which is the only place where we found seats. We had been informed that these forums are held at regular intervals all over the GDR. Their aim is to enlist the interest and participation of young Germans in efforts to solve the problems of local communities, cities, and the GDR as a whole. The youth are encouraged to raise any question that concerns them. No holds are barred.

It was an extraordinary experience for us. We had just been



to Buchenwald and made notes of, among other things, the two signs on the gates, hanging just as the nazis had placed them for the edification of their victims: "To each his just desserts," and "My country, right or wrong." Buchenwald and what it represented had made of the Germans—those that survived—a nation of silent people. Now here, a few miles from Buchenwald were gathered the children of those silent Germans. How would they behave?

They behaved as you would expect a similar gathering of American youth to behave—with one point of difference. They spoke without restraint or self-consciousness. They vied for the chance to speak. They heckled one another as well as the speakers on the platform. If they didn't like a speech or a statement, they booed. If they liked it, they whistled and stamped their feet. The one point in which they differed from most American student audiences was this: they were amazingly well-informed on international and national affairs.

Here are some of the questions they asked:

"Why did we have to postpone the realization of our economic plan for overtaking West Germany from 1961 to 1965?"

"Why did we make such a difficult plan in the first place?"

"Why did our newspapers publicize the goals so much?"

"Why did we cut out our airplane industry, and who was responsible for this mistake?"

There were, of course, other questions to be expected from an assemblage of youth: "Why is Jena so dull for youth? Why does our radio plague us on Saturdays and Sundays with broadcasts about collective farms?"

Filled with phony preconceptions of German youth, we were astounded at their conduct and participation in the forum. We had expected to hear questions like the last one, but we had not anticipated that the German youth of today would be so deeply concerned with every aspect of their country's economy, and would boldly challenge their government leaders to explain and account for mistakes.

Such a forum could not take place in the Federal Republic.



Though some West German youth have managed to sustain a genuine interest in the economic and political development of the FRG, they have not been encouraged to express their views, certainly not if their views are critical of the Establishment. In the Federal Republic, silence is still golden.

As for the "drabness" of GDR life, one wonders how this idea gained currency. True, night clubs as we know them, dance halls and honky-tonks are in short supply in the GDR. Prostitution has been eliminated. Some of the boys might gather in a back room for a quiet game from time to time, but gambling is also in its death throes. There is plenty of drinking, but mostly in homes. Add up all of these items and for some people the total may amount to a dull life. But this was not our impression of people's lives in the GDR.

The per capita participation in sports, for instance, far exceeds our own. We visited the GDR University for physical culture and sports in Leipzig and learned that a large proportion of its 2,000 students were adult workers studying through correspondence courses. One of the most comfortable, most scenic train rides in the world is the journey down the Elbe from Berlin, and all this country is virtually a sportsman's paradise. Individuals, families, groups—here in the Elbe Valley during the summer they are swimming, boating, hiking, camping, playing all kinds of games, and—believe it or not—apparently liking it!

There is good music on the Berlin radio. Admittedly, we shared the desire of many German youth for more of the popular tunes. But no one can complain they don't hear the classics. Nor is there ground for complaint about East Berlin's theater fare. The nights we attended the Berlin Brecht Ensemble and the Berlin Opera in March, 1961, the East Berliners were far outnumbered by the West Berliners! We remember asking ourselves at that time, "If life is so much gayer and pleasanter in West Berlin than it is here, why in heck don't some of these West Berliners go home and let us get to the coffee counter?"

It's even said in the West in all seriousness, that love has been outlawed in the GDR and that one never sees young couples dis-



play affection for one another. This kind of idiocy is, of course, easily put to rest by a single statistic: in East Berlin there are 15 births per 1,000 people; in West Berlin only ten.

As for the material well-being of people in the GDR, we found no one badly off, no one without shelter, clothes, shoes, personal necessities, or enough to eat. Stories of mass hunger, of homeless people, of children without shoes or clothes are simply falsehoods.

What we saw of housing conditions in the GDR compares favorably with what we saw in any of the working class districts of West Berlin, London and Paris. It certainly stands up well in comparison with the working class districts of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

There is a housing shortage in the GDR, and in the cities which suffered great bomb and artillery damage there is still overcrowding. Mayor Schmidt told us that about 30,000 East Berliners still needed flats. He estimated that a few years more would be required to satisfy this need. In the last few years the East Berlin administration has built approximately 10,000 flats per year, but the construction of a chemical industry and electrical equipment plants, as well as a civic center at Marx-Engels Platz, have now been given priority.

During both our visits to Germany we saw an abundance of food in GDR stores. Meat, vegetables, fowl and fruit were available everywhere. However, we were told by friends that shortages of one or another food do occur. And we read in GDR publications of last August that meat was in short supply and that a system of customer registration had to be established so as to prevent inequity in distribution. There had also been a shortage of potatoes which are a staple of the German diet.

These shortages give rise to complaints and grumbling, as might be expected. Customer registration, as we have reason to know from our wartime experiences, is disagreeable. But shortages in some foods is not hunger, customer registration is not starvation, and grumbling is not revolt. To say that they mean the same thing may be good cold war propaganda, but no one should mistake it for the truth.



What the shortages and customer registration indicate is that the GDR has not yet ensured the uninterrupted supply of all kinds of food for its population. We inquired about this and talked with a number of people responsible for planning the country's economic growth. We were told that the harvest was lean last winter because of the weather. The shortage of fodder forced the slaughter of livestock, resulting in a shortage of meat. An agricultural specialist gave a more fundamental explanation. He thought the GDR had been unable to make the massive investment required for a more rapid development of its chemical industry and the mechanization of farm work. This, he believed, was one of the consequences of the West German economic offensive against the GDR.

Whatever the cause, the government appeared to be concerned with solving the problem once and for all. During our visit we were given to understand that leaders of the government and the political parties were engaged in meetings with farmers and agronomists. *Neues Deutschland* and other GDR newspapers were carrying articles about various aspects of the problem. Already a change had begun. The first half of 1962 registered a 12.5 per cent increase in industrial and agricultural output over the same period of the preceding year. And GDR citizens insist that despite shortages and the lag in fertilizer manufacture and mechanization they consume more protein food per capita than the people of West Germany. They claim they achieved this superiority several years ago, while the frontiers were open, and they have figures to prove it: 57.1 kilograms of meat consumed per capita in the GDR in 1960 as against 54.5 kilograms in the Federal Republic; 13.6 kilograms of butter as against 7.8 kilograms in the FRG; 30.3 kilograms of sugar as against 27.3 kilograms in West Germany.

These realities of life in the GDR cleared up many questions that had been bothering us. They made it clear that West German propaganda about conditions in the GDR is fabricated out of thin air. In respect to all the necessities that make for material well-being, Germans in the GDR were not in any degree worse off than the Germans living in the FRG. To be sure, they wanted



more amenities, more luxuries. They were critical of mistakes and shortcomings of their leaders. But that didn't mean they were impatient to bring back their former employers and landlords and restore them in government. They had emphasized this distinction on more than one occasion.

They had done it in June, 1953. The West Berliners and the Bonn politicians may still talk about a "popular uprising." They may name the street leading into West Berlin from the Brandenburg Gate after that event—"June 17 Street"—and boast that only the intervention of Soviet troops had defeated the "revolt." In the GDR everyone knows the people themselves crushed that fascist putsch, that the Soviet troops intervened only in Berlin, and that even there the workers had begun to arm for a showdown with the provocateurs from West Berlin.

They did it again when the wall was built. Workers who had previously been considered "non-political" by their colleagues volunteered to guard the factories and critical points of the frontier. Two hundred thousand youth had to be turned away from People's Army enlistment stations because of insufficient housing to accommodate them. Applications for membership in the Socialist Unity Party sharply increased.

When West German leaders ignore these facts, and other evidence of the GDR population's determination to build socialism in their country, is it merely because they are blind to the realities or is it also because they fear these realities? When they keep insisting "we must rescue our brothers," is it no more than a case of "none so blind as they who will not see?" True, in the past the West German leaders have demonstrated that they possess more than their full measure of these afflictions. But it is significant that they use drastic and brutal measures to prevent the West German population from learning these realities and acting on them.

The consensus of opinion in the GDR is that the West German leaders are fully aware of the realities of life in the GDR, but are bent on colliding with these realities—with their eyes wide open—even though they know that to do so means to encounter



resistance. They are like a driver who, seeing the traffic snarl at an intersection, deliberately ignores the traffic signal and speeds past the red light, though it means an inevitable collision. The weight of evidence strongly suggests that a collision was the driver's intent. And that is exactly how the people of the GDR regard the provocations and the propaganda of the West German leaders—an armed clash is their aim.

If one were to pursue the analogy of the driver a little further and argue that if sober he was insane or bent on suicide, the analogy would fall flat at this point. No GDR leader believes Bonn Chancellor Adenauer and War Minister Strauss or Alfred Krupp and Hermann J. Abs of the Deutsche Bank are insane or tired of living. No one believes they are unaware of the fact that an armed clash at the Berlin wall will bring NATO troops into collision with troops of the Warsaw Alliance. Or, more specifically, American forces into collision with Soviet forces. Nor is there doubt that in Bonn and Cologne and Essen and Hamburg the leading circles understand full well what that kind of a collision—in these days of hydrogen-tipped nuclear missiles and the present relationship of forces being what it is—will mean for them. No, it would be misreading the signs to think that the West Berlin politicians, militarists and industrialists are insane or bent on suicide. Behind their rashness is a calculated risk, of course, but there is also something else—*another aim*.

This was the hypothesis to which the logic of everything we saw and heard in the two German states led us. We didn't reach it quickly or easily. We reached it only after assimilating a vast accumulation of statistics, interviews, impressions, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, books, official documents, and notes, notes about everything we saw, heard and experienced. It was a maze of information, some of which led off into blind alleys or meaningless detours. Our chit-chat with Germans alone would add up to a sizable volume. What illuminated the entire mass of data, however, was the almost casual account Hermann Axen gave us of why the wall had been built in the first place. It was close to *Neues Deutschland's* deadline and Axen had already ex-



plained the economic significance of the wall. Then, without any change of tone, "Furthermore," he declared, "you Americans should bless us for building the wall. None of us would be here, very probably, if we had not built it."

It was said casually, and it wasn't very different from the kind of remarks one hears frequently in these times. Had it come from almost any one of our acquaintances we might have shrugged it off. But we didn't, because Axen didn't impress us as a man inclined to speak lightly about such a matter, or even to be casual about it. On the contrary, he was very serious.

"Possibly you will remember that in the spring and summer of 1961 Prime Minister Khrushchev had much to say about a peaceful settlement of the German question. He made several speeches in his own country on the question, and in Vienna on June 4 he presented your President Kennedy with a memorandum which contained the Soviet proposals as to how a settlement could be reached peacefully."

The substance of that memorandum was the well-known Soviet proposal to conclude a German peace treaty. In order to negotiate this, Khrushchev also proposed immediate convocation of a peace conference, establishment of West Berlin as a free city, and a suggestion that the talks on such a treaty be held to a period of six months. The memorandum also stipulated a number of concessions which the Soviet Union was prepared to make so as not to "prejudice the interests of the United States or other powers in Europe," as the wording of the document puts it. The memo assured President Kennedy that the Soviet Union would not demand the immediate withdrawal of the Federal Republic from NATO; would not seek the recognition of the German Democratic Republic or the Federal Republic of Germany by all parties to the treaty; would not object to two treaties if the United States is not ready to sign a single peace treaty with both German states; would not object—in order to guarantee the free status of West Berlin—to the stationing of "token contingents of troops" of the four occupying powers, or of "troops of neutral countries under United Nations auspices for the same purpose."



The memo also stipulated Soviet willingness to accept an "interim solution" of the Berlin question "if for one reason or another the Governments of the United States and other Western powers are not ready for this." It assured President Kennedy that "the Soviet Government is ready to examine any constructive proposals by the United States Government on a German peace treaty and normalization of the situation in West Berlin. The Soviet Government will show the maximum of good will in order to solve the problem of a German peace treaty by mutual agreement between the USSR, the United States and the other states concerned." Finally, Khrushchev's memorandum said that "if the United States does not show an understanding of the necessity for concluding a peace treaty, we would regret this since we would have to sign a peace treaty, which it would be impossible and dangerous to delay further, not with all states but only with those that want to sign it."

This memorandum, which most Americans seem not to have read, struck several new notes. The proposal that the powers negotiate a settlement of the German question was not one of them, having been made in 1949, 1952, 1954 and 1959. One thing that was new was the extent to which the Soviet Union was ready to accommodate its interests so as not to prejudice American interests. Another thing that was new was the memorandum's tone of urgency in face of the growing militarization and declared revanchist aims of the West German state. The memo said: "The question of a peace treaty is the question of the national security of the USSR and many other states."

Hermann Axen continued his account. "You know what happened. Your government replied on July 17 and said there was no need for a peaceful settlement because West Germany was not threatening anyone. Keep the date in mind! It's important because nine days before, on July 8 to be precise, Adenauer's Christian Democrats had held a secret session at Bonn and issued a communique. In this communique they dropped for the first time their usual demagoguery about the reunification of Germany. They said the question of German reunification would be solved



by integrating all of Germany into NATO."

He asked us if we thought our government knew about this decision of Adenauer's party at the time of drafting the reply to the Soviet Union. We replied that we didn't know since it was the first time we had heard about the Bonn communique. Axen continued.

"Another date. May 1961. The NATO Military Planning Committee met in Washington and produced a plan to finish rearming West Germany this year. If you look over the plan—they call it MC 96—you'll see it has in mind West Germany's nuclear armament."

Adolph Heusinger, one of Hitler's top generals, a war criminal wanted for atrocities against Soviet people and for exterminating Jews, is chairman of NATO's Military Planning Committee and has an office in the Pentagon in Washington. Certainly the State Department knew of this NATO plan before drafting the reply to Moscow's memo.

There was another date about which Axen could not be certain. It was during the visit of Adenauer and Strauss to Washington in the Spring of 1961. He didn't know the precise date of their talk with President Kennedy. It was April 12 or 13.

"They asked Kennedy for help in supporting an uprising in the GDR. Kennedy was skeptical of their conviction it could be pulled off successfully. He told them to go ahead if they thought they could do it, but not to bank on United States support. We understand that he felt if it worked, fine; if it didn't work it would discredit us and our claim to have a peace treaty. So, four dates, and they all add up to something."

The implication was clear. Even if the President had not been apprised of the Christian Democratic Party's communique of July 8, even had he discounted elements of danger in the NATO plan of May, he could hardly have been impervious to the intentions of the West German leaders. His conversation with them, if Axen's information was correct, had occurred even before his meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna. This was the logic of it, but logic alone doesn't always provide the correct conclusion. We



wondered aloud if that had spurred the GDR to put up the wall. Axen shook his head.

"That was only part of it. Knowing Bonn's intentions, knowing the Bundeswehr's capabilities, knowing Kennedy's attitude to an attack on us, to another attempted putsch—this was only part of it. The other part is that preparations for war actually took an active turn. NATO openly threatened war. There was a full alarm throughout NATO. In 1960, there were only two NATO maneuvers; in 1961, NATO held five. This was done when Heusinger called for tactical atomic weapons to be stationed near our frontier.

"At the same time we observed signs of activization of certain circles inside the GDR. We suddenly had a renewal of trouble with the Church. Old nazis and dissidents became very active. It was only when all these things began to coincide that we notified the Warsaw Powers we considered it necessary to fortify our frontier. Of course, they agreed."

Again the logic held. Certainly no government with a sense of responsibility to its people could remain indifferent in the face of such circumstances. One coincidence could be ignored, two overlooked, three discounted after an evaluation, but when the coincidences became still more numerous there was real cause for concern. Yet, it seemed to us not unlikely that when Adenauer and Strauss learned they could not count on the United States to pull their chestnuts out of the fire they discarded the scheme. In that case the GDR may have built the wall unnecessarily, at least from the standpoint of its military defensive function. Axen didn't think so.

"It must surely have interested Americans to observe what happened after the wall was built. The West Germans and the West Berliners ranted and raved but they didn't attack the wall. In fact, not a single revanchist dared show up at the wall. But Willy Brandt called on Kennedy to attack the wall. He wrote a letter asking Kennedy to 'take the final risk.' And when Kennedy refused and sent your Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson to make big speeches against the wall without doing anything about it,



Bonn and West Berlin were furious. They began to attack Kennedy for 'selling them down the river.' For a time Kennedy and his 'eggheads' were held responsible. It was a case of history repeating itself. After the first big war they held the pacifists and socialists responsible for defeat. After the second war they even got around to blaming Hitler. Now it's your turn."

By the time we left Berlin, we felt we had seen and heard enough to warrant still another conclusion about the wall. After weighing the evidence we are prepared to stand by it: Not only the 17 million Germans in the GDR were rescued from disaster by the wall. The 50 million Germans in the FRG, the overwhelming majority of whom are ordinary people like ourselves, busy at trying to make a living and raise families and find some happiness and meaning in their lives, were also rescued from an uncertain fate.

*But what came home to us most directly was the conviction that the wall was a godsend for the American people.*

The decision to build the wall was a joint decision of the Warsaw Pact powers. Prior to that decision there was concern—we would even say, deep anxiety—in all the socialist countries. We know the feeling that swept the Soviet Union during the weeks that preceded that decision. We read of manifestations of that feeling in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, China—yes, even in the Mongolian People's Republic. There was general alarm that NATO's preparations, President Kennedy's call-up of reserves and request for more funds for the military, and the increasingly belligerent and arrogant tone of the West German leaders indicated preparations for war. The Soviet Government expressed its own alarm by cancelling the scheduled demobilization of the 1,200,000 troops it had unilaterally decided to return to civilian status at the beginning of 1960. It also resumed nuclear weapons tests. Like the GDR government, none of the Warsaw Pact governments accepted President Kennedy's assurances that the West Germans were not able to wage war, were under the "control" of NATO which was represented as being solely defensive, and had given their word not to use force.



At that time it was common knowledge throughout the socialist countries (and it certainly should have been told the American people) that the West German army numbered 300,000 actives and 250,000 reservists; that the land forces had 2,400 tanks and 1,500 armored carriers; that the air forces included five fighter-bomber squadrons adapted for carrying atom bombs, a missile group and four Nike ground-to-air battalions; that the naval forces included 17 combat squadrons including two of destroyers, four of torpedo boats, seven of mine sweepers, one of landing craft—a total of 240 vessels of which 136 were combat ships. The equipment of these forces with missiles and other weapons of mass annihilation had been going on since 1958. Its eight artillery battalions attached to the divisions were armed with 203.3 mm. atomic cannon. It had three Honest John missile batalions attached to the army corps. Since the spring of 1961, of course, all these figures have been greatly augmented. But already at that time West Germany's armed forces had come to dominate NATO, and as every American knows by this time, the top members of the German General Staff, all former Hitler officers, held the leading strategic roles in NATO.

The notion that West German membership in NATO would somehow exercise restraint on the Bonn politicians, Ruhr industrialists and old-line General Staff commanders, all of whom were either nazis and nazi supporters, is considered ridiculous—utter unadulterated nonsense—in the socialist countries and even amongst the majority of West Europeans, who know these West German leaders from personal experience. We have heard the idea compared to the case of the animal trainer who tried to persuade his neighbors in a crowded apartment house to let him keep a full-grown Bengal tiger in his flat. As the story goes, he gave his word that the beast was tame, had been raised on milk, liked to be cuddled, and, in any case, wouldn't leave his master's flat. Of course the neighbors, people with rudimentary common sense, were not persuaded. And the story ends with the line: "They are still alive, but the poor tiger died."

Nor are the people of Europe, West as well as East, disposed



to stake their lives on the word of honor of these ex-nazis. They remember too well how many times a West German leader's word was broken at the very moment he was giving it. They don't have to go to the history books for this information—it's part of their personal experience. Some Americans also know this. For instance, Fred Warner Neal, a former newspaper man and State Department officer who is now a professor at the Claremont Graduate School, gave a lecture on July 20, 1961 in which he said:

"I well recall being in Frankfurt and Bonn in 1950, on a mission for the U.S. State Department, when there were newspaper reports that the West German government had a 'defense adviser.' This was indignantly denied by both the Americans and the Germans, although everybody knew it was true. Then it was admitted, but the West Germans said, solemnly, they had no defense ministry. A few months later the defense adviser became minister of defense, but, the West Germans said, no army. A few months later there began to be organized a German army, but, said the West Germans, no traditional uniforms and no generals. A few months later the army donned the traditional uniforms and the rank of general was re-established, but, it was said, no general staff, and so on. About the same time West Germany adopted as its national anthem the infamous '*Deutschland über Alles*,' but, it was said, the first verse containing the offensive words, would not be used. Now the anthem begins, as before, '*Deutschland, Deutschland, über Alles*.'

"Goethe, in an untypical poetic burst of patriotism, once wrote that when he thought of Germany he could not sleep. It is not surprising that today a great many other people cannot sleep when they think of Germany—but for other reasons."\*

Such keen observations of one of the most conspicuous European

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\* *War and Peace and the Problem of Berlin*, by Fred Warner Neal, Marzani & Munsell, Inc., New York, N. Y.



realities come from few Americans, but one hears them in ordinary conversations everywhere in Europe. The socialist governments, keenly sensitive to every straw-in-the-wind relating to changes in the plans of Bonn, were alerted early enough during the spring of 1961 to take counter action. These actions were understood quite thoroughly by the public of the socialist states, and those journalists erred who reported, for instance, that the Soviet people were not informed of the resumption of nuclear tests by their government. How they could miss being informed, when every newspaper in the Soviet Union devoted its entire front page to announcing the government's decision, was never explained. The fact is that the preparations of the Warsaw Pact countries to counter NATO preparations were common knowledge throughout Europe, having been publicized by the press of the socialist countries.

Bonn also drew conclusions from the direction developments were taking. When Adenauer and Strauss ascertained that the Kennedy Administration was unwilling to commit the United States to armed support of an invasion of the GDR, the West German calculated risk took on a new dimension. It was still possible, however, to manufacture an incident and organize sufficient expressions of discontent inside the GDR to serve as a pretext for moving in "to rescue" the GDR population. If they could not count on full American military support, they could be confident that the Western occupation troops in West Berlin would not hinder anything they might do, and in addition, would be helpful in keeping open the corridors from West Germany to West Berlin—those "access rights" which all along have been indispensable for the transportation of spies, provocateurs, criminals, and arms. West Berlin, in point of fact, is the keystone of West German designs on the GDR and points eastward, and the continued presence of NATO occupation troops in West Berlin, requiring the indefinite continuation of "rights of access" to West Berlin, is the granite core of that keystone. Therefore, even if Bonn's risk had been increased by the Kennedy position, it had not expanded to insurmountable odds, and Adenauer and Strauss reckoned that if the GDR probe failed, the presence of huge American, British and



French occupation troops in West Germany would help to deter a counter-blow. Until August 13, therefore, a West German strike at the GDR had not been ruled out.

It was ruled out by the wall. The wall represented in no uncertain terms that a West German strike at the GDR could not succeed. But the wall also marked the culmination of a buildup of strength by the Warsaw Pact powers. It dramatized not only the GDR's intention and ability to repel an attack, but the intention and ability of the GDR's allies to deliver a counter-blow whenever and wherever deemed necessary. The wall signified to the West German leaders that the risk was too high, for what they would be risking was their own physical existence. They did not wish to take "the final risk." Just as later, during the Cuban crisis, they were overjoyed at the prospect of an American-Soviet collision and rushed to goad President Kennedy on with a pledge of "support," so they would not have minded if Kennedy had tried to smash the wall. And Willy Brandt let the cat out of the bag in his letter to President Kennedy, a "mistake" for which he was severely rebuked by the tactful and careful Herr Strauss.

One of the marvels of this entire sequence of events, which developed over a period of several months, is that most of us Americans knew nothing about it. Being journalists and fully aware of the obstacles to getting the real story about most important developments, we do not relish the term "conspiracy of silence" which is frequently tossed at our information media. Yet, in this sort of development, which could have placed the national security of the American people in jeopardy, Americans who knew what was going on apparently did not consider it necessary to inform the public. We got our first hint of what was at stake in the wall from the British, who paraded along Whitehall and around Trafalgar Square bearing signs that said: "Better wall than war!" Although the stage had been set to involve the United States as the main combatant against the Warsaw Pact countries, the British—far more clearly than we—understood the consequences of such an involvement. Why?



## V.

# A "CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE"

When you mull these things over and do some home-work in recent history, our present position in relation to Germany is likely to conjure up two ghosts from the past: Pearl Harbor and Munich. Let's face it! There was no "conspiracy of silence" about the events that culminated in the wall; Americans who knew what was happening most probably did not see it as a danger to the American people. The Pearl Harbor inquiry established that our commanders in Hawaii and the Philippines also saw what was happening, in fact, were informed of the position and movements of the Japanese fleet; but they simply did not see those movements as a threat to Pearl Harbor. We have already expressed our opinion that the case of the West German leaders who ignore the determination of the 17 million East Germans to build socialism is NOT a case of "none so blind as they who will not see," but a case of an intention to subvert and destroy the reality they do see. The wise old saying was fully applicable at Pearl Harbor. We believe it is relevant also in respect to the wall.

True, the owners of our media of information betray a self-hypnosis concerning everything that happens in the area of East-West relations. Despite the factual record they attribute all incidents without exception to "the Communists," even to "the Kremlin." The Berlin "crises" are invariably caused by "Communist machinations" or "Soviet intransigence." So long and so assiduously have they labored to construct this bogeyman that it is not illogical to think that they have come to look upon their contrivance as reality. And although our policy-makers in Washington should and perhaps do see what is before their eyes, their long pre-occupation with the "Communist menace" and the "So-



viet threat" has become a film that obscures and distorts their vision.

In Potsdam, about an hour's drive from Berlin, the American tourist receives special attention. Particularly in the former manor house of the Hohenzollern prince, a charming place beside a small lake, are Americans accorded a warm welcome. This was the scene of the Potsdam Conference of July 17 to August 2, 1945. The guides are delighted to lead Americans through this place, to point out the piano used by President Truman, the study of Churchill and, after his election defeat, of Attlee, the chair in which Stalin sat. And pointing to one of the small balconies that looked down on the conference table, she told us: "And there is where your President Kennedy sat. He was a newspaper correspondent then." It was a reminder that President Kennedy is fully aware of the agreement at Potsdam to implement the agreements at Yalta and Teheran. These had, as their main content, the commitment of the Anglo-Soviet-American allies to collaborate in the destruction of German militarism both during the war and after. Explicitly stated also in these agreements was the commitment to uproot and destroy nazism. Yet, the Kennedy Administration to date is implementing quite a different policy, the policy of rebuilding German militarism under leadership of ex-nazis as an instrument against socialism and our wartime ally.

It is one of the great turn-about in history. For Americans with even a rudimentary knowledge of recent history must surely recall what happened during the war. A few years ago Adolf Heusinger was planning the death of every American within firing range. Now he sits in the Pentagon surrounded by boot-licking American generals. A few years ago our war crimes tribunals charged Hermann J. Abs, head of the Deutsche Bank, with having directed much of the looting of nazi-occupied Europe, in the role of a glorified German Al Capone. Today our biggest bankers, publishers and politicians—including Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Henry Luce—parade Abs around the country as a paragon of virtue and an oracle of truth. It is indeed unbelievable!



Nevertheless, it is no secret that such things could and did happen. Most of us know that a re-armed, ultra-reactionary Germany was deliberately re-established—mainly by our government—as a “shield” against the socialist countries. The Germans were to “hold the line” while we, with our atom-bomb monopoly, were to be the “sword.” We were told we had to have this “shield” because “the Communists” were threatening our very survival by trying to over-run all of Europe. We know today that this was all a gigantic fraud, but at that time we didn’t stop to consider that the Soviets did not have the atom bomb, had just fought four years of a war in which they had lost 30 million people and half of their industrial potential, and wanted nothing on earth so much as a chance to bury their dead, heal their wounded, and rebuild their devastated country. We fell for the cold war line then, and allowed the Dulles brothers, Dean Acheson, John J. McCloy, General Lucius Clay and other dollar patriots to take over.

They took over completely. They scrapped Potsdam, Yalta and Teheran. They let the nazis out of prison and handed over \$10 billion of American taxpayers’ money to ex-nazi bankers like Abs, and to war criminals like Flick, Thyssen and the IG Farben gang. They set up the Adenauer government in the Federal Republic and split Germany into two states. They drew the West German state into NATO and sped the re-arming of the German militarists, the restoration of German imperialism, and the return of the nazis to political power.

Dulles, Acheson and company probably figured their gambit had won the game before it really began. The West Germans would grow strong enough to re-unite their country. They would then—who knows? But for Dulles, Acheson and their friends, the they were unable to do the job alone, if the “shield” faltered or was repelled, the American “sword” would join the fray. It would be the Germans who would take the brunt of the counter-blow, the Americans who would deliver the coup de grace. There were undoubtedly other calculations behind U.S. policy. People who sounded like patriotism incarnate in declaiming that “we can’t



do business with the Communists' showed no compunction whatsoever in doing business with men who amassed fortunes from the properties of six million murdered Jews. The most respectable American corporate heads locked arms with the most degenerate nazi thugs in a partnership to plunder first Germany, then Europe, then—who knows? But for Dulles, Acheson and their friends, the main aim was to use German blood and American machines for the final showdown with the Communists. As John Foster Dulles wrote in his book, *War or Peace*, the calculation of these American schemers was that by forcibly reuniting Germany and drawing the GDR into NATO, West Germany would gain an advanced strategic position in Central Europe which would undermine the Soviet position and the socialist military and political position in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and other adjacent countries.

This was not an original idea. Harry Truman wanted to play the Germans off against the Soviets in 1941 after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. By helping the side which was losing, Truman said, America could let them kill each other off and then pick the bones of both corpses. That very idea was also the kernel of the "strategy" pursued by Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier as they led Britain and France down the road to Munich. The tragic irony of its adoption by the American policy-makers lay in the fact that they behaved as if they enjoyed the monopoly of it. They acted as if the idea would never occur to the West Germans.

The Germans behaved as might have been expected. They pledged allegiance to NATO. They virtually kissed the backsides of their filthy-rich, powerful uncle who so generously gave them a few bills from his fat wallet and in addition handed them a gun. And they solemnly vowed again and again and again that they would never, never break the peace—except against the Communists. This exception so delighted their patron that he gave them a free hand in their own country and in NATO; that is, in Western Europe. Read the speeches of every West German spokesman who has come to the United States or spoken in Germany for



international consumption and you will find these themes invariably and repeatedly emphasized. Then examine the structure of the West German government and you will find all the major policy-making offices in the Federal Republic occupied by ex-nazis and Hitler generals. Look at West Europe; you will see the Bundeswehr where Hitler was unable to place them.

Something else happened, too. The wheel has come full circle. The tail has come to wag the dog. The West German leaders are no longer the "shield." They have become a "sword," and with nuclear arms, they will be THE "sword" of NATO and the Atlantic Alliance. This was the lesson of the Berlin wall, when Adenauer and Brandt sought to use Americans as their "shield." It is still the lesson of West Berlin, where American boys stand guard over the interests of the ex-nazis.

If this lesson needs further study, one can reflect on the curious fact that the policy of our government seems to be identical to the policy of the West German leaders, indeed, is dictated by them. It may not be apparent to us, but sober-minded, responsible people in Britain, France, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Norway, Denmark and other European countries simply do not believe the Ruhr magnates and other powerful West German industrialists will relinquish their claims to exploit the workers and to possess the plants, factories, and lands either in Berlin, both East and West, or in the German Democratic Republic, or in the countries east of the Oder-Neisse line. They do not believe that the Bonn politicians will ever agree to recognize the frontier between East and West Berlin, or the sovereignty and authority of the GDR, or the permanence of the Oder-Neisse frontier. They do not believe that the German general staff will discard their dreams of revenge, conquest and glory through another war, and their schemes for obtaining the nuclear arms with which to wage it. They do not believe that a war kindled by this combination of German monopolists, militarists and politicians, no matter whether a civil conflict or a small, local clash, can be prevented from escalating into a world war. They do not believe



that if we Americans remain entangled with these German monopolists, politicians and militarists, through NATO and other ties formed by our business leaders and politicians, that we can avoid being drawn into the conflict.

Listen to General Lucius D. Clay setting forth the "basic commitments which we have made in Germany." The General, who functions also as a director of a number of corporations, such as Continental Can, made these remarks last June 18 at a New York dinner:

"We have pledged ourselves in solemn language to protect West Berlin. We have defined this protection to include freedom of access by air for all and on the ground for the allies; and to maintain the viability of West Berlin which includes freedom of access for persons and goods. We have promised to maintain our troops in West Berlin as long as its people want them. We have also stated that we are opposed to any lessening of the ties which now exist between Berlin and the Federal Republic. We are committed to the Federal Republic not to recognize the East German Government, but to continue to support the right of the German people to determine themselves in free elections the kind of government under which they want to live. We have also stated that the final boundary lines of the new Germany can not be determined until there is a single German government. These are the basic principles from which we can not deviate . . . and which we are prepared to defend with all the strength at our disposal."

Is this an American speaking? It is hard to believe. What springs to mind is not that Clay himself has written in his book *Decision in Germany* that "nothing was agreed upon" by the four victor powers "that guaranteed a right of access nor were particular rights granted on the roads, on the railroads or in the air" to Berlin from West Germany. What strikes the eye is Clay's complete identification of the interests of the American people with those of the West German monopolists, militarists and politicians.

They want the factories and plants of West Berlin protected in the expectation of again owning and controlling them. Clay



says "we" have pledged to protect them. They want access routes to West Berlin kept open for the transport of agents, spies, criminals, money, goods and, when the time comes, troops for the "unification" of Germany. Clay says "we" have pledged to keep them open.

They want American occupation troops to stay as the "shield" they need to draw America and the Soviet Union into mutual annihilation, after which their "sword" will be supreme. Clay says "we" will maintain our troops there.

They want no recognition of the German Democratic Republic. Clay says "we" will not recognize it.

They want no recognition of the Oder-Neisse frontiers. Clay says "we" will not recognize them.

And, says Clay, "we" intend to stand by these commitments with all the strength at our disposal, that is, at the risk of national suicide.

From this it can be seen that General Clay could not more faithfully represent the interests of the West German monopolists and militarists were he one of them. He has passed off as "our" policy, that is, the policy of the American people, a policy in no iota different from the policy of Adenauer and Strauss, Krupp and Abs, Speidel and Heusinger. In all of his remarks, the one basic fact he neglected to mention was what vital *American* interest is being protected by our West Berlin garrison of 6,000 men, our West German occupation force of about 200,000 troops! The reason for Clay's omission is simple: there is no vital American national interest either in a West Berlin that remains the tinder-box of a new conflagration, nor in a West German state intent on putting sparks to the inflammables in that tinder-box. The paramount, over-riding American national interest, to which all other national interests are subordinate, lies in peace—a peaceful solution of the problem of West Berlin and the problem of Germany.

For the protection of American national interests, we require an American policy, not a German policy, and especially not a



policy corresponding to the aims and needs of the most reactionary circles in Germany. How can American national interests be protected by a nazi policy?

We repeat, the true vital American national interest, that is, the true interest of the overwhelming majority of the people who make up the American nation, requires stability and peace in Europe. With West German militarization almost completed, it is already very late to act for European stability. The wily men of Bonn, flattering the megalomaniac De Gaulle, have already begun the creation of an alliance with which to dominate Western Europe and determine the course of NATO. Neither the Ruhr kings nor the French money-bags have undying affection for the United States. To provoke a general conflagration in the hope of coming out alive on top of the heap of corpses requires no more military power than they presently command. All it takes is an incident that will embroil America with the Soviet Union—an incident that can be manufactured any day of the week in West Berlin.

The true vital American national interests requires a new approach to the Soviet Union and the socialist world. It requires not merely coexistence with the Soviet Union, not merely an armed truce, but cooperation in achieving stability in central Europe. For 17 years now the policy of building up Germany as an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist military force has benefitted no one but the mortal enemies of the American people and the handful of Americans who make money on it. And it has brought us far down the road to another Munich—to another Munich in the nuclear age!

The Soviets have again invited us, have implored us in fact, to participate with them and other interested states in eliminating the conditions through which the West Germans hope to set off an American-Soviet clash. That means solving the problem of West Berlin, the problem of the GDR-FRG frontier, the question of the Oder-Neisse border. The reasonableness of the Soviets in respect to the Cuban crisis and Khrushchev's renewed appeal for



negotiation on the other outstanding questions suggests that a new effort to resolve the problem of Berlin can succeed.

Regardless of whether Adenauer and De Gaulle or anyone else opposes it—and Bonn and Paris are certain to oppose it—we believe our government should accept this invitation. We believe our acceptance would conform to the true national interests of the great majority of the American people.







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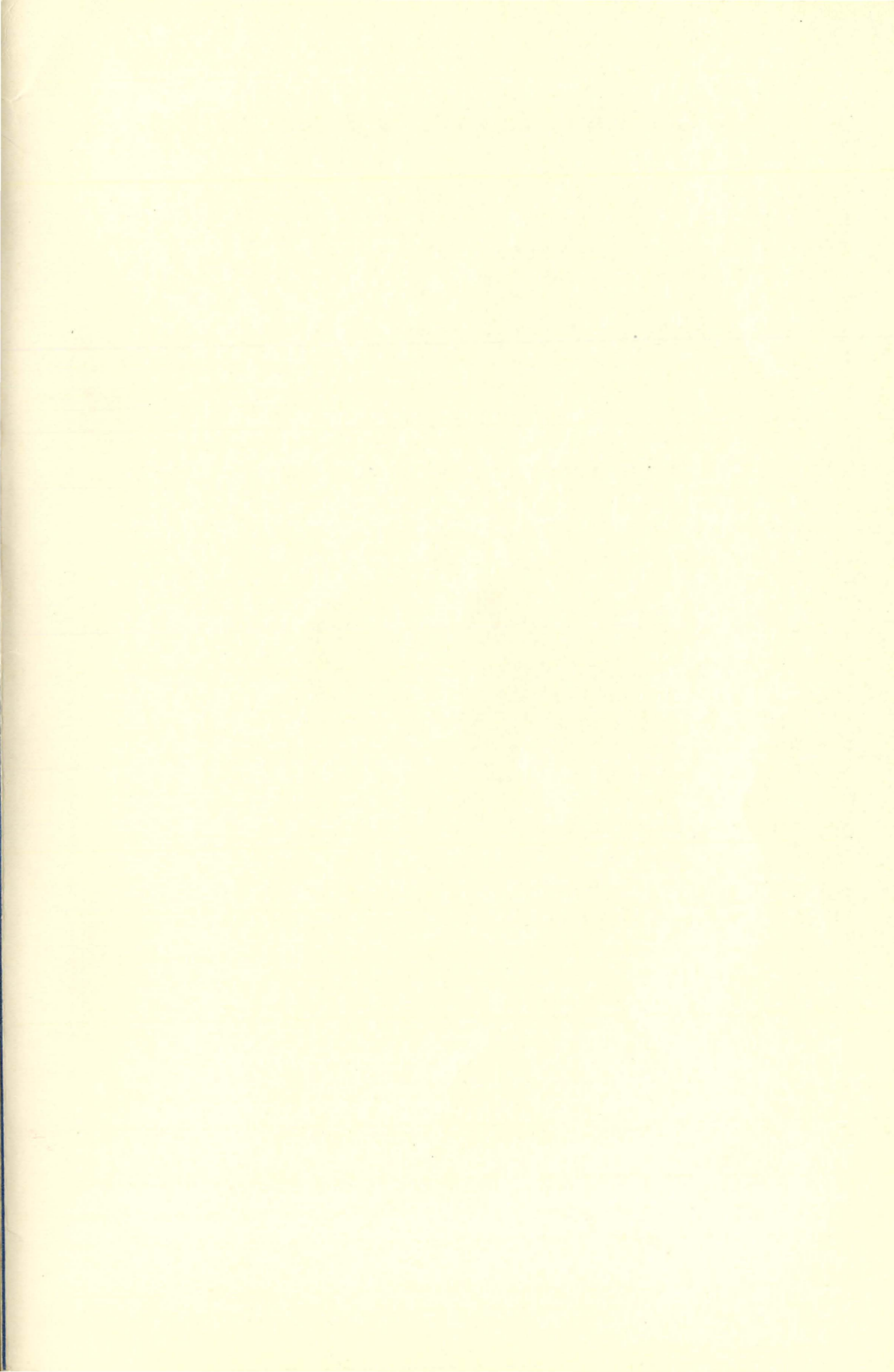
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